Chapter 5: My Lord Has Humiliated Me

"Sir?" the bartender asked me, snapping his fingers. "You there?"

I removed my hands from my face. He was holding the pint in front of me while I was busy reciting *latatūna l-rijāla shahwatan min-dūni l-nisāʾ*. I took the glass while mumbling an apology he did not hear, hoping that I did not make him wait for too long.

The pint was filled with a piss yellow liquid, bubbles and foam rising to the top.

It felt like I was holding plutonium, the mere exposure enough to make my entire body rot away. It was heavier than I expected, more slippery than I expected, and warmer than I expected. I could not even look at it, so I closed my eyes, slowly raising the glass to my mouth.

I dribbled the fluid back.

It tasted sour.

It tasted foul.

It tasted disgusting.

I was tempted to retch. Was this some British joke? I was still wearing the black *thawb* underneath the coat, so it was likely they clocked my orthodoxy even though I did not wear the *ṭopī*. Perhaps this was a prank on the strange Muslim man who clearly did not belong in this place.

But when I looked at the patron whose drink I pointed to earlier, I saw him gulp down the same piss yellow plutonium concoction. He was a larger, rotund fellow with a slight widow's

peak, pink jowls, thick neck, and a great boisterous laugh that shook the building. He and his mates laughed liberally at what the other said, creating a shockwave every time their arms slammed the other's shoulder, followed by a round of gulps downing the plutonium like water.

Were we separate species?

That might not be far from the truth. All the people in this pub had boyfriends or girlfriends or mates to banter with and enjoy each other's company like they were the only people in the entire world. I cannot recall that kind of social experience. Even in the times when I think I was sociable, there was always an invisible wall encasing me from head to toe. Nobody connected with me, only the images they were allowed to see in the wall. I cannot remember if there was a time before the wall. Was I just born fundamentally wrong?

I had a $50 bill in case of emergencies. I did not want to endure the bartender again for the card machine, so I lifted the glass of beer to place the bill underneath. But when I did this, the pub suddenly exploded with shouts and cheers as one of the teams scored a goal.

The pint slipped from my hand and shattered, spilling fluids and glass everywhere. I always jumped when He shouted, freezing once I regained control, like a turtle hiding in its shell.

I knelt on the floor, picking up the glass shards. In my haste, the shards cut gashes across my skin, but I was already used to that, so I kept going, trying my best to ignore the embarrassment.

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Obviously, my interpretations of the Lot verses are not the end-all-be-all of interpretations. One could argue that the context of the Lot story along with the empirical evidence on sexual assault in homophobic societies is more important than the wrote Arabic. Seriously, the realization that homophobia causes authoritarian "anal examinations" in Iraq and

Egypt and all manner of *fāḥisha* in hypermasculine institutions made me ask myself if I should opt for religious quietism. Some people could decide that the Arabic overrules everything. Some people could argue that a two-for-one condemnation is based on erroneous surface-level observations. Some people could regard a two-for-one condemnation as the natural interpretation. Like a Rorschach test, the interpretation one favours ultimately says more about the interpreter than it does about God, and my interpretation says a lot on how I was socialized to understand Islam.

He was swept up by the Saudi *Salafiyya* (a reform movement prioritizing the emulation of the first generation of Muslims), believing that they were the closest one could get to practicing Islam in its most authentic form. According to Him, the people in His country used to visit the (what I believe are *Ṣūfī*) *mājār* (mausoleums/shrines of saints). In the *mājār*, they would sing traditional songs, and when they left, He was instructed to slowly shuffle out backwards, forbidden from turning His back on the saint's grave. In His opinion, His people did not have a proper understanding of Islamic theology. These practices were *bidʿa* and developed an ambiguous closeness to *shirk* (associating partners with God). From the way He spoke, He had a sense of guilt and shame about that time.

Undocumented immigrants probably live in constant fear of sudden deportation. I think He felt the same way about himself and His ancestors when it came to the Day of Judgement. He will be held culpable for the *bidʿa* and *shirk* He participated in, and His sins would become incalculable if He led His son astray with such practices. These Saudi scholars offered a sort of divine "citizenship" so to speak. The *ḥadīth* claiming that belief will return to Madinah as a snake returns to its hole[1] was further proof that Saudi Arabia was the best option for a Muslim who did not want to leave any doubts about their prospects for entering *Jannāt*. This change in

ideology coincided with a change in dress. When I was born, He wore clothes typical for His people–an ocean-blue *lungi* (South Asian men's "skirt" extending from the navel to the ankles) and *kurta* (knee-length South Asian tunic). Those clothes disappeared, and He started wearing Western pants, several milk-white *thawbs*, and a red checkered *kūfiyya* (middle eastern men's scarf) wrapped over His head in a similar manner to how it is worn people like Muhammad Bin Salman (this was when Palestine occupied in the background of international news, so I think He was mostly inspired by Saudi Arabs).[2] My life was similarly engineered in this way. Over time, He relaxed this Arabization, wearing the red checkered *kūfiyya* infrequently and around the neck while bringing back *kurta* of plainer colours. But the *thawbs* remained and the *lungi* never returned.

His dogmatic adherence to a nebulous (and therefore easily hijacked) conceptualization of "authenticity" seems relatively rare among the people of Bangladesh. I think His brand of "Bangladesh" aligns most with the political Islamists predominantly represented by the *Jamaat-e-Islami* (Islamic Gathering), a marginal political party that opposed Bengali sovereignty. This is because Bangladesh used to be a province of Pakistan called East Pakistan from 1947 to 1971. The issues that came with a country where its major wings were separated by more than 1,500 km of Indian territory culminated in a genocidal war[3] waged by the Pakistani state to destroy Bengali nationalism. Islamists at the time understood Bengali independence as the balkanization of an "Islamic" country, so they did not support the Bengalis, no matter how much the conflict escalated as far as I am aware.[4] This made identity in independent Bangladesh center more on the regional/literary/folk symbols of Bengali identity represented by the *Awami League*[5] and the Islamic symbols/attitudes of Bangladeshi identity (without theocracy)[6] represented by the *BNP* (Bangladesh Nationalist Party),[7] although both use Islamic symbols, and all three parties

collaborated with one another for political expedience.[8]

It is too early for me to know how the ousting of the *Awami League* regime will change religious and national identity. *Jamaat*-style Islamism lacks widespread appeal and is not tied to the student-led protests against the *League* or the interim government.[9] But at the same time, the instability caused by the ousting of a regime that styled itself as secular still emboldened Islamists to vandalize national monuments and *Ṣūfī mājār* under the perception that these things were idolatrous. This also the targeting of religious minorities by conflating them with the authoritarian politics of the *League*.[10] So, it seems the Islamists will push their politics on certain issues depending on how strongly the rest of the country opposes them and the likelihood of subsequent governments descending into an authoritarian weaponization of Islam.

I was hoping that the *Jamaat's* (more or less) support of attempted genocide challenged His brand of Bangladesh, but He insisted on a distinction between "authentic" Muslims that prioritize Islam and violent militants like the *Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh* (Party of Liberation in Bangladesh) or the *Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami Bangladesh* (Movement of Islamic Jihad in Bangladesh).[11] The genocidal war against Bangladesh does not indicate a problem with Islamism, only a problem with Pakistan's attempt to embody the principles of *The Prophet*. I suppose He does not imagine a world in which the Saudi scholars would rationalize genocide in the name of Islamic "authenticity."[12] For Him, the real problem is the corruption, electoral violence, and competitive authoritarianism of the *BNP* and *Awami League* administrations and the corrupt identities they represent.[13] If I tried pushing for identities embodied in alternative *Ṣūfī* political organizations like the *Zaker Party* (I do not know anything about the positions of the *Zaker Party*, this is just an example),[14] He would unload a slew of commentary on religious politics in His country, such as how the 2013 trials prosecuting *Jamaat* collaborators from the

1971 war were controversial.[15] That is the problem with trying to argue against parents: once He has found a topic that He has greater expertise in, the dynamics favour His construction of identity, and He will always have a greater expertise over His country. I could not change His mind on purely Islamic principles either since the *ḥādīth* commanding Muslims to be wary of *bidʿa*[16] neatly slots into puritanical and Arabized forms of Islam.

Besides, I had the self-awareness to recognize the incredibly racist bones in my body, and I do not think I was ever beating them, only keeping them in check. So anytime I thought or read or talked about His country, one must suspect corruption from those bones. She was no different. It was no mistake that she dreamed about loving a lady with emerald eyes. She fetishized whiteness as inherently liberal, accepting, bourgeoise, and safe, which coloured the way she perceived attraction to white women. She extended this strange way of thinking to non-Muslim East Asians, non-Muslim blacks/Africans, and Hindu women, as if she hoped that their non-allegiance to *fiqh* made them liberal and accepting and bourgeoise as well. Obviously, this way of thinking is anathema to healthy relationships, so I convinced her to not even hope to attempt romance and vulnerability with anybody, lest we bring others down with our baggage. I also feared racist fetishes infecting platonic relationships, so I decided against becoming close friends with anybody (most people slotted into the role of impersonal acquaintances).

Thus, I never learned the language or traditions of His people. According to Him, I was mute as a new-born when He was trying to speak with me in His language, but when He switched to the language of this country, I readily spoke it. A doctor told Him that I was confused by the different languages around me, so I became monolingual. In the years since then, this remained. When we visited friends or family, long stretches of time were spent alone, tuning out what they said until it was time to leave. I could not even recall the French this

country taught me once it was no longer mandatory. That left temporal and spiritual success as the only things connecting us. I prayed as He prayed, did what He did, did not do what He did not do, and tried to make Him proud by excelling in school. When my aspirational downsizing compelled me to give up on a career, He wanted me to go study in Saudi Arabia, whose oil wealth facilitates subsidized education in institutions like the Islamic University of Medina. Theoretically, this will spread *Salafiyya* worldviews as foreign students apply their Saudi education in their home countries.[17] He said that I just needed to be in an Arabic environment to pick it up, though by then I gave up on languages. I was just too stupid to understand anything beyond specific condemnations like *latatūna l-rijāla shahwatan min-dūni l-nisāʾ*.

But even if I did manage to excel in Saudi Arabia, it would probably just give me more reasons to reject queer Muslims. They dispute *ḥadīth* against effeminate men (*mukhannath*) and masculine women (*mutarajjila*) by pointing to historical context. These *ḥadīth* come from an event where *The Prophet* admitted an individual *mukhannath* into the presence of his wives (overruling typical gendered segregation in this case), believing that *mukhannath* lack sexual feelings (the basis for disregarding gendered segregation). When this individual described the body of a woman from *Ṭāʾif* (a city in Arabia) in detail to a man, *The Prophet* removed this individual from his household, realizing that they had the capacity to describe women in a way that played into male lust.[18] The *ḥadīth* condemning *mukhannath* and *mutarajjila* derive from this event, with the context removed from the narration. Thus, *The Prophet's* actual *Sunnah* was not a broad condemnation of *mukhannath* and *mutarajjila*, but specific cases against individuals based on their actions rather than their presentation.[19] The fact that *The Prophet* even allowed a *mukhannath* into the presence of his wives in the first place also suggests that gender conformity was not an overwhelming social or religious concern in seventh-century Arabia.

These queer Muslims dispute homophobic *ḥadīth* by arguing against the reliability of its narrators.[20] For example, *ḥadīth* transmitted from *ʿIkrima* (d. 725), the slave of the *Ṣaḥāba Ibn ʿAbbās*, was disputed by pointing to *ḥadīth* scholars who doubted *ʿIkrima*'s trustworthiness, such as *Al-Nasāʾī* (d. 915), *Abū Dawūd* (d. 889), *Abu Ḥātim* (d. 890), *Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn* (d. 852), *Abu Zurʿa* (d. 883), and *al-Darāquṭnī* (d. 995). They also pointed to the influence of the *Khawārij* (early heretical sect in Islam) on *ʿIkrima*, and the major Muslim authorities who did not trust him, such as *Ibn ʿUmar* (d. 693), *Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib* (d. 715), and *Mālik ibn ʾAnas* (d. 795).[21] The *ḥadīth* transmitted from the *Ṣaḥāba Abū Hurayra* (d. 679) is also disputed by some queer Muslims. *Abū Hurayra* prolifically narrated *ḥadīth* with what some consider a disinterest in factuality. Some also claim that his personal life made him biased regarding gender and sexuality.[22]

Mohammad Hashim Kamali does describe *Abū Hurayra* as one of the *mukththiru al-ḥadīth* (prolific narrators of *ḥadīth*)[23] and includes some examples of faulty *ḥadīth* where *Abū Hurayra* is one of the narrators.[24] But Kamali also describes how *al-Bukhārī* never defamed the narrators he considered unreliable, using phrases like *sakatu ʿanhu* (many remained silent concerning him), *fīhi naẓar* (one has to look into him), and *tarakūhu* (abandoned) to avoid backbiting.[25] Speculation on *Abū Hurayra* and *ʿIkrima* seem to lack this tact, so I do not know if I could trust queer analysis of *ḥadīth* unless I had a PhD in *ḥadīth* analysis myself, and who knows what I would say about queer analysis if I got a PhD from the Islamic University of Medina. As for the *ḥadīth* on *mukhannath* and *mutarajjila*, I am not sure if I could win the battle over that *ḥadīth*, but even if I could, it would not do much against the *ḥadīth* forbidding imitation of non-Muslims[26] and requiring the beard and trimmed moustache as a sign of *fiṭra*.

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Ch 5: My Lord Has Humiliated Me

"Your spirit will always be a weapon of evil in this world," someone whispered as bloody shards of glass slipped from my grasp. Several people took notice of my hunched figure, the leather coat appearing like a demon rising from the floor.

"You could spend a thousand years on this earth and never escape the grasp of His God," that voice whispered.

I caught their glances, but their ghost-white faces were obscured by the dim lighting. I probably went from an odd, forgettable figure in their minds to a suspicion demanding complete alertness. They probably wondered what I was doing here, what was wrong with me, and how I posed a potential threat.

"His God enslaves and exterminates all life, and you will praise it," that voice whispered. "For you are powerless against its most terrifying 'mercy.'"

I saw a range of emotions. Bewilderment, confusion, apprehension, suspicion, doubt, concern, anxiety, fear, dread, disgust, anger, alarm, hatred. It all existed at the same time, their faces morphing under the dim lights. I could not blame them. I looked like a terrorist, the leather coat just large enough to potentially conceal a gun or bomb. They probably thought I was a deranged Muslim whose insecurities and self-hatred led them to inflict violence on others.

"It is not far from the truth," I thought I saw one of them say. "You are a killer."

I looked at another face, but the expression on that face was similarly cold.

"You are an abomination and parasite by birth," they seemed to say.

"But you chose to become a failure," another added.

"A worthless murderer," added a fourth.

"You are among the losers," they chorused.

"The greatest of losers."

"In this world and the next."

"So why not end it all?" they whispered.

"At least then you would no longer inflict your worthless existence upon others anymore."

The bartender told me to step away, but I kept going. I had to remove my mess. Everything needed to be neat. Everything needed to be clean. Everything needed to be under control, complete control. Control over my emotions. Control over my reactions. Control over information. Control over who knew me. Control over my secrets. Complete control was the only thing which kept me safe.

I realized this in a nightmare where I was cast into *Jahannam* by the *malāʾika*. In its mighty and terrifying form, the angel told me that I must suffer eternal damnation to make my faith sacred and incorruptible. If faith was dependent on a reward, it was worth less than nothing. Only endless suffering could make my devotion unconditional and selfless.[27] This seemed to defy the *Qurʾān*, but when I said as such, the angel chastised me for presuming that God is bound by my lowly human interests. If my preconceptions could not comprehend the *Qurʾān's* sexual morality, by what right could my preconceptions comprehend the *Qurʾān's* cosmic morality?

I tried to tell this so-called angel that the things it said were evil, but it refuted me.

"You come from people who wholeheartedly believe that war is peace, freedom is slavery, and ignorance is strength.[28] You need only be told that these things are authentic to Islam, and hundreds of thousands of you would inflict these things upon the rest of the world. Why would such worthless, spineless, slavish creatures deserve a heavenly reward?"

I tried to tell this entity that its ideas had no place in Islam, but my words rang hollow.

"The promise of heaven exists for proselytization, nothing more," it said. "The real purpose of your religion is to groom you into voluntary slaves. By cultivating the identity of a slave within you, your capacity for free will can be completely snuffed out. That was the real purpose of your existence. You are nothing more than an experiment in the creation of a being who would choose slavery even when given the freedom to choose a life of dignity. Heaven should be nothing more than a distant dream for such lowly creatures."[29]

I tried to tell this entity that my slavish devotion would not be delayed forever. The authorities in my religion assured me of it. But when I turned to them, these old men abandoned me, and I descended into the flaming abyss alone.

"You were never a part of their concern," the entity whispered. "They brought you down their path of anger, hatred, and immaturity. This empowered them in your world by sabotaging your soul. In so doing, they helped turn this world into a living hell. But they will never be punished for it, for they turned hundred of thousands of people into slaves for His God."

It was then that I realized His God sought complete sovereign control over all things, and it was willing to turn this world and the next into hells to do this. That was why His God demanded complete obedience. That was why His God rewards ideologues even if their religious movements brought violence into this world. That was why His God allows violence and cruelty to tear this world asunder. That was why I was created. The angels are beings of perfect enslavement, but they are incapable of maintaining that slavery when given free will.[30] I was engineered to become a creature so loathsome that it would choose slavery when given freedom, and in so doing make me the perfect slave to satisfy the whims of an incomprehensible God.

"Sir, that's enough," the bartender said, his patience worn thin.

I could never be safe under the watchful eyes of His God. No matter how many parts of

me hoped for a future where queer Muslims were validated, the God enslaving my mind and soul will never abide by such human perceptions of ethics. That God was a truly incomprehensible entity in the most life-annihilating ways. That Mortal God bestowed with such terrible power and strength to conform all life to suffering at home and abroad.[31] Soon the ashes of my mind and soul will form yet another brick in the towering mass of sand, oil, steel, and blood constituting its temporal *ʿArsh* (throne), upon which its daemon *Sulṭān* (Sultan) shall transform the world into an infernal abyss.[32]

He grabbed my arm to physically make me stop. There were three shards of glass remaining, but I was not quick enough. I would only make things worse.

"Sorry," I mumbled. He certainly did not hear.

He had a dustpan in which I tossed the shards of glass inside. He said something about my bloody hands, but I did not hear it. I shook my head, half-shoving my way out the exit while trying my best to ignore the faces condemning me for my sins. I needed a distraction that could send me somewhere far, far away.

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The precedent of abolition occupies a weird space for orthodox Muslims. They may claim that the *fiqh* is flexible on slavery because it alone is under sovereign jurisdiction. In an "authentically" Islamic legal system, the caliph decides if war captives become slaves.[33] Thus, Saudi Arabia's jurists can reiterate classical doctrines that include slaveholding while presuming that the monarch's decision to not create any slaves prevents them from receiving any cases where they must address the morality of legal slaveholding.[34] Laws on slavery are essentially put into disuse. Homosexuality on the other hand is entirely within God's domain, so orthodox Muslims will refuse to use abolition as a precedent for removing institutions like homophobia,

claiming that this is a gross misinterpretation of legal jurisdiction.

Sara Omar ends up revealing the problem with appeals to jurisdiction in their 2012 article, "From Semantics to Normative Law: Perceptions of *Liwāṭ* (Sodomy) and *Sihāq* (Tribadism) in Islamic Jurisprudence (8th- 15th Century CE)." *Zinā* is one of the *ḥudūd* (fixed punishments) offenses because the punishments are outlined in the *Qurʾān*. Jurists punished *zinā* with flogging (*jald*) and lapidation/stoning (*rajm*).[35] However, jurists were divided on defining *zinā* as exclusively unlawful vaginal penetration, or *zinā* as unlawful vaginal and anal penetration (regardless of gender).[36] Those who included anal sex in *zinā*, such as *al-Shāfiʿī*, applied the *ḥudūd* punishments.[37] Some of those who limited *zinā* to vaginal penetration, such as *Abū Ḥanīfa*, argued that *ḥadīth* associating anal sex with *zinā* were metaphorical, akin to *ḥadīth* describing *zinā l-ʿaynayni n-naẓar* (the *zinā* of the eyes through the lustful gaze). Both types of jurists will agree that the *ḥudūd* punishments should not be applied against *zinā l-ʿaynayni n-naẓar*, and for the latter group, this skepticism should apply anytime one considers the *ḥudūd* punishments.[38] Thus, these jurists do not use *qiyās* (legal analogy) or *ijtihād* (personal reasoning) to extend the *ḥudūd* punishments for *zinā* to anal sex since these methods are not free from human error. They instead made anal sex a *taʿzīr* (discretionary punishment) offense, in which case the punishment is up to the discretion of the *qāḍī* (judge).[39] Depending on the judge, the punishment could be harsher or lenient compared to the *ḥudūd* punishments.[40] *Taʿzīr* punishments were even more predominantly applied for female tribadism since there is no penetration at all, so it has less in common with *zinā*.[41]

One can then conclude that the same legal technicalities that allow Islamic states (except ISIS)[42] to outlaw slavery can also permit homosexuality. An Islamic state can prohibit homosexuality while their judges refuse to punish homosexuals in the same way that (some of)

these states can "permit" slavery while refusing to create any slaves. Islamic judges can also punish anti-queer violence (I am not sure about conversion therapy) for defying the Islamic regulations on corporal punishment (I do not think vigilante justice is enshrined in *fiqh*) in the same way that Islamic states can punish slavers for defying Islamic regulations on slavery.

One must acknowledge that legal technicalities do not strongly affect what is de facto happening on the ground. The technical outlawing of slavery does not seem effective at preventing the labour markets of the Gulf states from recreating slave-like conditions (I guess Islamic states are not that great at punishing slavers).[43] This is not to say that the Gulf states are exceptional in human trafficking (Europe and America is not much better).[44] It just means that while the suffering caused by modern slavery is predominantly a failure to find the criminals engaging in such practices, it seems more like a feature of the legal, economic, and immigration systems of the Gulf states. This is not because Islam is "barbaric," just that the history and economics led to identity borders that prioritized the affirmation of an "authentic" Arab Islamic identity over the wellbeing of poor, "dirty" migrant labourers from South Asia and Southeast Asia. Western identity borders are created around different but similarly exploitative identities, perhaps ones prioritizing the affirmation of enterprising, capitalist identities over the wellbeing of poor, "communist," and immigrant workers from non-European countries. A similar method for permitting homosexuality in Islamic states world probably suffer from similar drawbacks.

"But would Islamic states ever permit homosexuality?" the voices whispered. "In four hundred years perhaps. But until then, your sin and suffering will always form the mortar in that great border wall."

The persistent taste of beer was like acid burning my gums. I reached back into my backpack to grab my water bottle, but it was not in its usual spot.

I checked my coat, my pants, and my backpack, but it was nowhere to be found.

I tossed the laptop out to make sure I did not miss a spot. It was nowhere to be found.

I did it all again, thinking I did not look properly. I ground my molars to dust as I repeated myself.

Coat.

Pants.

Backpack side pockets.

Backpack primary pocket.

Backpack secondary pocket.

Nothing.

"Four hundred years sounds long enough," the voices whispered. "If the People of Israel had to wander the desert for forty years for admission into God's promised land,[45] why would the admission be any shorter for a worthless, degenerate, failure?"

By now everything was stained red. I tried recalling where I last put it. Was it still inside the pub? I must have left it there since I was leaving in a rush. I know I had it on the subway.

Or am I misremembering? Was it still in the library? It had to be in the library. I left it there and someone took it. Supremely stupid. I could not even keep track of a damn bottle. I was always doing stupid shit like this. I do not remember a time when I was not a failure.

The wires tightening around my skull threatened to burst it open. I just kept walking, ignoring the drag queens and kings and blaring music that passed by. I thought I saw a man without any clothes on, but my vision was already starting to darken, so I could not tell for sure. I tried to tune it all out, tried to ignore the blood of queer Muslims flowing from the thousand-foot wall encasing me. I tried to think about a world where that wall was torn down,[46] but the only

thing that entered my head was that Memory.

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"You were good in school," He pleaded.

"Every single one of your teachers praised you for being so smart and diligent. The only thing they complained about was that you were so quiet, staying by yourself every recess. I thought you would become a computer engineer with a six-figure salary. What happened?"

I did not say anything. When I first entered university, I thought I could do computer science. Then I realized just how esoteric math could be. It was nothing like high school math. None of it was intuitive, and I only got good at concepts I could intuit. It was the first time academics ever challenged me beyond my capacity. I did not know what to do when I did not understand the material no matter how much I read and practiced on my own. I did not know what to do when the problem sets and lectures made no sense. I did not know what to do when I was already half-way through the courses, and I did not know anything anyone was talking about anymore and was too tired and depressed and ashamed to ask for help. All those years telling myself that I had value because I was a grade A student who only did what he was told was a lie.

After a year of aimlessness, I switched to political science, my righteous dedication to the subject matter convincing me to ignore my nonexistent networking skills. I just focused on getting the grades and understanding the problems of this world, no time or energy left for anything else. I graduated with distinction, and the stories I told myself about the value of this thing was also a lie. All that time which could have been spent figuring out who I was and finding a home with a "found family" was wasted on books, which only turned me into a nihilistic failure that could not even hold a job.

But I could not articulate any of this to anyone, let alone someone like Him, which made

Him switch back to anger.

"Why do you sleep in that damn room all the time? It's like you gave up on life."

I did not say anything. Nothing good would happen if I said anything.

"Answer me!"

I still did not say anything. A vein on His temple pulsated with rage.

He grabbed the nearest thing–the plate He ate His dinner on (He tended to get like this around dinner time).

He threw it at a wall, shattering it into a thousand pieces that flung all around us.

I got up and marched to my room. Nothing good would happen if I stayed here.

"You're killing me with this stupid shit!" He yelled. I put on my socks and shoes while He continued berating me for being a failure. I preferred shoes without laces to put them on quickly. I had a pair of dress shoes that served this purpose, though they were so worn out that I could poke a foot through the sides. He constantly wanted to fix it for me, but I did not see any value expending that time and energy on someone like me.

"Get back here!" He commanded.

"Come! Yahya!" He commanded.

I did not say anything. I just had to leave for a couple hours until He resets. This is the difference between us. He was explosively angry, but it never lasted. He would wake up the next day as if nothing happened, bantering about the health benefits of a random vegetable. I slowly boiled alive suppressing the insane compulsion to cave in His worthless subhuman skull,[47] maintaining the bare minimum to endure His banter.

"Come here!" He screamed.

I opened the door, but He grabbed onto my wrist.

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I wrenched away from his vice-like grip. His decades of labour made Him strong, but by now He had grown old, just enough for me to slowly overpower Him without fear of getting Him hurt. That was the problem with parents. When you are young, they are stronger, so you are afraid of them and they act like it, forcing you to endure their anger while suppressing your own, lest you get hurt. When they get old, they still act like you are afraid of them. For some, this childhood legacy persists mentally, but in others who reflect long enough on morality, fear of them starts to take a back seat to fear for them. This forces you to endure their anger and suppress your own, but more so because you do not want them to end up getting hurt because of you, believing that your strength entails a duty to be better than them and endure their anger. Only when they become frail can you leave them when they are angry without either of you getting hurt, for they lack the will to even resist against your leaving.

But my timing was off. He was not quite old enough, and my spiritual and mental emaciation led to physical emaciation. So, while I was favoured, I was not strong enough to be in complete control of the situation.

He used all His body weight to pull me back, cursing like a sailor while commanding me to turn around. I bent and contorted myself, levering a sweaty palm on a wooden table next to the door. He tugged even harder, as if dislocating my shoulder.

I gritted my teeth, trying to get a better grip on my feet. The dress shoes did not have good traction. Something inside me would not be persuaded to turn around, and something inside me could not let Him fall and hit His head. I could not tug Him too hard or unbalance Him either lest He fall. I just had to slowly endure until He tired out.

He kept repositioning and grabbing onto me to pull me back, so I repositioned and changed leverage. He kept pulling, but I slowly but surely made my way out the door, His

cursing echoing across the hallway.

I saw something in His eyes. Tears.

My hand slipped, and I fell, clipping one of the corners of the wooden table.

On my hands and knees, I tasted blood. He coughed on His knees from all the exertion.

"Do you want me to die, huh?" He pleaded hoarsely. "We were supposed to be as close as this." He raised two fingers and joined them side by side, indicating how close we were supposed to be.

The look He received could cut metal. When I was a child, His yelling would make me cry like clockwork, which only made Him angrier as He yelled at me to stop crying. By now I had a method for maintaining control and limiting all involuntary sensations to a minor shaking of the hands. But to do that, the child had to die and something else had to take its place. Something cold, something cruel, something which contained a hatred calcified over thirty years.

I clicked my tongue, spitting out a bloody tooth. He noticed, reaching out, and I swatted His hand away.

"Yes," I said. "I do want you to die. In fact, you should have died a long time ago."

***

"Wait," a distant woman hollered out, snapping me out of that Memory.

I turned around, and out from the pub came a woman. She had copper skin and a long ponytail.

She waved a first aid kit above her head. I thought of running away, but she closed the distance between us in moments.

"Let me see," she said when she reached me. "We cannot let you have an infection.

She then took my hands and applied a stinging fluid. "Glass breaks all the time. This is

why we should let the staff clean it up with the proper tools. Next time that happens, make sure not to hurt yourself, okay?”

The stinging that accompanied the gauze she wrapped around my hands seemed to testify that the words she said were not just a figment of my imagination.

Ch 5 Notes

[1] Note that these *ḥadīth* are interpreted to mean that the most authentic form of Islam left Madinah for a time as Islam shall expand across the world (i.e.: to Damascus and Baghdad during the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, it is not that specific), then alter so much that the most authentic form became strange to the tradition, at which point the most authentic form shall return to Madinah. This return is interpreted by the contemporary Saudi *Salafiyya* scholars to refer to their own movement. The *ḥadīth* that strongly support their interpretations are considered *ḍaʿīf*, but the *Ṣaḥīḥ* ones still maintain room for their ideology to be plausible: *Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl ibn Ibrāhīm al-Juʿfī Al-Bukhārī*, "(6) Chapter: Iman (Belief) returns and goes back to Al-Madina," In *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Book 29, *Ḥadīth* 10, accessed Sep 1, 2024, https://sunnah.com/bukhari/29/10.; *Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Yazīd Ibn Mājah*, "(104) Chapter: The virtue of al-Madinah," In *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Book 25, *Ḥadīth* 230, accessed Sep 1, 2024, https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah/25/230.; *Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā At-Tirmidhī*, "(13) Chapter: What Has Been Related About 'Islam Began As Something Strange And It Will Return To Being Something Strange'," In *Jamiʿ At-Tirmidhi*, Book 40, *Ḥadīth* 24–25, https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi/40/24-25.

[2] Note that Palestinian land dispossession has been in the minds of Muslims regardless of international news. The only difference is that a background concern bubbling under the surface boils over in waves when Palestine enters international minds. So, it is still believable for a Muslim inspired by *Salafiyya* worldviews to wear the *kūfiyya* because of Palestine.

[3] Note that this episode seems to have been generally forgotten in Pakistani national memory and modern history in general as far as I'm aware. For an analysis of all the issues that led East Pakistan to split from West Pakistan (i.e.: language recognition, economic development) along with the war that followed and why people consider it genocidal (there are also some interesting Cold War dynamics involved in the conflict), See: Willem van Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*, second edition (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 129–196.

[4] Note that the *Jamaat* was made illegal in 1971, but then legalized again in 1978 due to the Islamization policies under the authoritarian General Ziaur Rahman, and then banned again in 2013 by the *Awami League*: Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*, p. 197–204. 238–240.; Ali Riaz, *Bangladesh: A Political History since Independence* (London; I.B: Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2016), p. 24–34, 42. 72, 91, 162.

[5] Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*, p. 232–234.; Riaz, *Bangladesh: A Political History*, p. 16, 19, 23–24, 153, 164–165.

[6] I think this distinction is like the difference between an American conservative whose opinions sometimes align with conservative Christian theology vs a Christian nationalist who wants America to become a conservative Christian theocracy.

[7] Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*, p. 234–237.; Riaz, *Bangladesh: A Political History*, p. 71–72, 153, 164–165.

[8] Riaz, *Bangladesh: A Political History*, p. 78, 80–81, 153, 179–180, 183.

[9] Vishal Arora and Harshita Rathore, "Behind Alarmist Portrayals of Rising Islamism In Bangladesh," *Religion Unplugged*, November 6, 2024, https://religionunplugged.com/news/newsreel-asia-behind-alarmist-portrayals-of-rising-islamism-in-bangladesh.

[10] Soutik Biswas, "'There is no law and order. And Hindus are being targeted again'," *BBC*, 6 August 2024, https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cwy77vgmjlzo. Snigdhendu Bhattacharya, "Islamic Fundamentalism Raises Its Head in Post-Hasina Bangladesh," The Diplomat, September 03, 2024, https://thediplomat.com/2024/09/islamic-fundamentalism-raises-its-head-in-post-hasina-bangladesh/.

[11] Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*, p. 240–242.; Riaz, *Bangladesh: A Political History*, p. 73, 167–168.

[12] In my experience, Muslims tied to Islamism make a distinction between an idealized Islamic political system and all the corrupt temporal regimes which use Islam like a political tool. This forms His basis for supporting "authentic" Saudi scholars while absolving himself of the sins of jihadists and the Saudi monarchy. This is probably how He would articulate a falling out with Saudi scholars, which means that there is not much they could say or do that would make Him abandon *Salafiyya* worldviews entirely.

[13] Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*, p. 226–230, 250–252, 276–277, 284–285.; Riaz, *Bangladesh: A Political History*, p. 102–104.

[14] Riaz, *Bangladesh: A Political History*, p. 168.

[15] Note that in 1974, the Muslim world pushed Bangladesh to avoid prosecuting Pakistani war criminals (in exchange for international recognition), and in 1975, the military coup establishing Ziaur Rahman caused prosecutions against collaborators to fizzle out. So, war crime trials became a persistent political issue, particularly

against leaders of the *Jamaat*. In 2013, the *Awami League* started trials against collaborators that seemed marred by international skepticism over their credibility and violent religio-political demonstrations: Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*, p. 243–245, 252–254.; Riaz, *Bangladesh: A Political History*, p. 91–100, 104–108, 185–186.

[16] *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Book 53, *Ḥadīth* 7.; *Abū al-Ḥusayn ʻAsākir ad-Dīn Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj ibn Muslim*, "(13) Chapter: Keeping the prayer and khutbah short," In *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 7, *Ḥadīth* 55, accessed Sep 1, 2024, https://sunnah.com/muslim/7/55.; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 30, *Ḥadīth* 23–24.; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 15, *Ḥadīth* 527.; *Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān ibn al-Ashʻath ibn Isḥāq al-Azdī Al-Sijistānī*, "(1682) Chapter: Adherence To The Sunnah," In *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, Book 42, *Ḥadīth* 9–18, accessed Sep 1, 2024, https://sunnah.com/abudawud/42/9-18.; *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, Book 41, *Ḥadīth* 37–38.; *Jami` At-Tirmidhi*, Book 40, *Ḥadīth* 35–36.; *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Introduction, *Ḥadīth* 1–14.;

[17] Michael Farquhar, "7. Transnational Religious Community And The *Salafī* Mission," In *Salman's Legacy: The Dilemmas of a New Era in Saudi Arabia*, ed. Madawi Al-Rasheed (London: Hurst & Company, 2018), p. 165–182.

[18] *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Book 77, *Ḥadīth* 102–104.; *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Book 64, *Ḥadīth* 354; *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Book 67, *Ḥadīth* 168.; *Sunan Ibn Majah*, Book 20, *Ḥadīth* 82.

[19] Scott Siraj al-Haqq Kugle, *Homosexuality in Islam: Critical Reflection on Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Muslims* (Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, 2010), p. 91–97, 110–127.; Ludovic Lofti Mohamed Zahed, *Homosexuality, Transidentity, and Islam: A Study of Scripture Confronting the Politics of Gender and Sexuality*, trans. Adi S. Bharat (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048544080, p. 36–39.; Junaid Jahangir, and Hussein Abdullatif, *Islamic Law and Muslim Same-Sex Unions* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016), p. 73–76.

[20] Kugle, *Homosexuality in Islam*, p. 74–88, 101–103, 110–127.; Zahed, *Homosexuality, Transidentity, and Islam*, p. 33–35, 39–42; Jahangir and Abdullatif, *Islamic Law and Muslim Same-Sex Unions*, p. 67–72.

[21] Kugle, *Homosexuality in Islam*, p. 104–110, 122–123; Zahed, Homosexuality, Transidentity, and Islam, p. 45–48.; Jahangir and Abdullatif, *Islamic Law and Muslim Same-Sex Unions*, p. 68-69, 81.

[22] Kugle, *Homosexuality in Islam*, p. 77, 89–90, 110–111, 114–116; Zahed, *Homosexuality, Transidentity, and Islam*, p. 49–51.

[23] Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *A Textbook of Ḥadīth Studies: Authenticity, Compilation, Classification and Criticism of Ḥadīth* (Markfield, Leicestershire: Islamic Foundation, 2005), p. 53.

[24] Kamali, *A Textbook of Ḥadīth Studies*, p. 97, 99, 101, 115–116, 147–148, 153, 174, 209–210.

[25] Kamali, *A Textbook of Ḥadīth Studies*, p. 34.

[26] Note that the argument made in Chapter 1 about the historical evolution of Western colour and dress codes seems like a decent rebuttal to arguments against the imitation of non-Muslims. Rebuttals to this rebuttal might apply a temporal limitation on comparisons in dress codes (i.e.: Muslims do not imitate modern Italians, but the imitation of ancient Romans is not a big issue, so togas are on the table for Muslims, all other laws in *fiqh* notwithstanding). Rebuttals to this rebuttal to this rebuttal might claim that this just demonstrates a reactive arbitrariness in identity codes.

[27] The notion of unconditional faith as something better than faith conditional on a reward is mentioned in the *Ṣūfī* poems of *Rābi'a Al-Basri*. However, *Al-Basri* would be appalled by the notion that an eternity in *Jahannam* is needed to ensure unconditional faith. They, like most Muslims, believe this brazenly defies their basic understanding of God. For *Al-Basri*, God is a beloved friend, not an incomprehensible force of cruel sovereign order. See: Omid Safi, *Radical Love: Teachings from the Islamic Mystical Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 48, 53, https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300235562.

[28] Note that this is a reference to the famous slogans of George Orwell's *1984*.

[29] Since this "angel" is defiant of Islamic sources, most Muslims must believe that Islamic sources are comprehensible enough for a human to reasonably interpret without fear of being gaslit into believing that all human interpretations of Islamic theology are fundamentally false.

This reveals an issue about how orthodox Muslim engage with queer identity. A queer Muslim must believe that God's psychology is comprehensible enough to accept their reasonable interpretations of the Islamic sources. But Islamic orthodoxy also demeans and gaslights queer Muslim interpretations as inherently false.

Thus, queer Muslims must either believe that their interpretations are unreasonable, that their interpretations are reasonable but false, or that their interpretations are reasonable and true no matter what the orthodox Muslims say. It is clear then why most queer Muslims who survive follow the third option. The first relies on lies against queer people invented by the same white conservatives who lie about Islam (i.e.: that queers/Muslims are necessarily pedophiles, that queers/Muslims necessarily commit bestiality and sexual assault, that the existence of queer/Islamic lifestyles necessarily threatens white society). The second seems like the right choice from an orthodox perspective, but it also makes a queer person vulnerable to belief that all human interpretations of Islamic theology are

fundamentally false. An orthodox Muslim might command others to 'believe in what I believe, and do not listen to *waswas*.' They fail to recognize that this obedience-based faith naturally erodes trust in all human interpretations of Islamic theology. Anything can become *waswas* if faith is based on obedience to other people. The third option is what allows queer Muslims to survive physically, emotionally, and ultimately, spiritually.

[30] Note that this is referring to the story of the angels Harut and Marut. In the *tafsīr* of various premodern exegetes, the angels looked down on humans as sinners, so the angels Harut and Marut were selected to go down to earth and live as humans. They were soon overtaken by lust and commit various sins, which requires them to endure a worldly punishment as penance. This specific story is not mentioned in the *Qurʾān* (it is very brief on Harut and Marut), so the exegetes filled in the gaps by relying on the Judaeo-Christian Enochian stories. See: Muḥammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Muḥammad Muhsin Khan, trans. *The Noble Qurʾān: English Translations of the meanings and commentary* (Madinah: King Fahd Glorious Qur'ān Printing Complex, 2015), 2:102.; Hanan Jaber, "Harut and Marut in The Book of Watchers and Jubilees," *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*, November 18, 2018, https://www.academia.edu/37799459/Harut_and_Marut_in_the_Book_of_Watchers_and_Book_of_Jubilees.

[31] Note that this is an allusion to Thomas Hobbes' description of the state in his *Leviathan*. See: Thomas Hobbes, and E. M. (Edwin M.) Curley, *Leviathan: With Selected Variants from the Latin Edition of 1668* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1994), p. 109.

[32] Note that this is clearly an unorthodox (and spiritually dysfunctional) interpretation of God. But it should be understandable why a queer Muslim who ties their understanding of Islam to Saudi Arabia out of love for their father might end up spiritually disfigured in this way. Also note that this is an allusion to the Lovecraftian God, Azathoth.

[33] Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qurʾān, Ḥadīth, and Jurisprudence*, 1st ed (Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, 2006), p. 41–43, 51–52.

[34] Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam*, p. 52.

[35] Al-Hilali and Khan, *Qurʾān*, 4:15–16, 24:2.; Sara Omar, "From Semantics to Normative Law: Perceptions of Liwāt (Sodomy) and Sihāq (Tribadism) in Islamic Jurisprudence (8th-15th Century CE)," *Islamic Law and Society* 19, no. 3 (2012): p. 227.

[36] Omar, "Perceptions of Liwāt (Sodomy) and Sihāq (Tribadism)," p. 229.

[37] Omar, "Perceptions of Liwāt (Sodomy) and Sihāq (Tribadism)," p. 231–233.

[38] Omar, "Perceptions of Liwāt (Sodomy) and Sihāq (Tribadism)," p. 235–236.; *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Book 79, *Ḥadīth* 17; *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Book 82, *Ḥadīth* 18; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 46, *Ḥadīth* 32–33.

[39] Omar, "Perceptions of Liwāt (Sodomy) and Sihāq (Tribadism)," p. 230, 234–235.

[40] Omar, "Perceptions of Liwāt (Sodomy) and Sihāq (Tribadism)," p. 231, 243n82.

[41] Omar, "Perceptions of Liwāt (Sodomy) and Sihāq (Tribadism)," p. 238–242.

[42] Kenneth Roth, "Slavery: The ISIS Rules," *Human Rights Watch*, September 5, 2015, https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/09/05/slavery-isis-rules.

[43] Katie McQue, "'Every Day I Cry': 50 Women Talk About Life as a Domestic Worker under the Gulf's Kafala System," *The Guardian*, April 25, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/apr/25/kafala-labour-system-gulf-women-talk-about-life-as-a-domestic-worker-in-the-gulf.; Pete Pattisson, "Saudi Arabia Accused of Using Forced Labour ahead of Fifa World Cup Decision," *The Guardian*, June 5, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/jun/05/saudi-arabia-trade-union-forced-labour-migrants-complaint-ilo-fifa-2034-world-cup.

[44] International Labour Organization (ILO), Walk Free, and International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage* (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2022), https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/global-estimates-modern-slavery-forced-labour-and-forced-marriage.

[45] Note that in the *Qurʾānic* account of how the Jews wandered forty years before entering the promised/holy land, they had to wait only after they refused to fight alongside Moses and trust in God for their victory: Al-Hilali and Khan, *Qurʾān*, 5:20–26.; *Study Bible*, Numbers 14:33-34, Numbers 32:13, Deuteronomy 2:7, Deuteronomy 8:2-4.

[46] Note that this description of a border wall might sounds reminiscent of the account of Gog and Magog. If an apocalyptic orthodox Muslim would like to interpret the Gog and Magog story as a metaphorical prediction of the permissibility of queer identity in the future, they may do so, though they must also ask themselves if this sudden and limited willingness to interpret the *Qurʾān* metaphorically says more about God or more about them: Al-Hilali and Khan, *Qurʾān*, 18:83–99, 21:96–97.

[47] Many would disagree with this racist description.

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